

Asia Regional Cash Working Group Meeting Minutes

IFRC, Ocean Tower, Sukhumvit, Bangkok

Participants

Name	Title	Agency
Isidro NAVARRO	Livelihoods & Cash Delegate	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Nichola PEACH	Regional Advisor – Cash-based Transfers	World Food Programme
Tomomi ISHIDA	Cash Officer	FAO
Daniel GILMAN	Humanitarian Affairs Officer	UN Office of the Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs
Samantha ORR	Humanitarian Affairs Officer	UN Office of the Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs
Laura DEVOS	Humanitarian Consultant	United Nations Population Fund
Eileen TUFAY	Cash-based Transfer Programme Associate	World Food Programme
Jeppe ANDERSON	Regional Emergency Officer	World Food Programme
Elmar LORETI	Country Director	ACTED
Marie-Christine BONNIER	Food Security Expert	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
Ali MANSOOR	Training Officer	CALP
Rowena DACSIG	CWG	Philippines CWG
Suzanne WARGO	PRCWG Chair	Pacific Cash Working Group
Shereen NOORI	CBT Officer	Afghanistan WFP

Agenda

- 1. RCWG Terms of Reference**
- 2. RCWG Work Plan**
- 3. Cash Feasibility Assessments – How can we be ready in Asia-Pacific?**
 - Overview on cash feasibility assessments (IFRC)
 - Presentation on joint feasibility assessment experiences (Pacific, Afghanistan, Philippines CWGs)
 - Open Discussion on joint feasibility:
 - Opportunities, challenges and potential for joint assessments
 - Implications for emergency preparedness & response and multi-purpose cash
- 4. AOB**

Introduction, RCWG Terms of Reference & Work Plan by Nichola PEACH, WFP

The group was welcomed to the IFRC office as the host for this quarterly meeting. Introductions were made and the RCWG Terms of Reference was discussed. Comments had already been collected from the group on the ToR so this was to be the final vetting of the document.

The group went through the objectives of the TOR as per the below:

1. Strengthen coordination of CTP across the Asia and Pacific region in ongoing operations, preparedness and response
2. Standardize and harmonize CTP standards and common approaches including with regards to the regional specific context of emergency response and preparedness
3. Share organizational and regional experiences across region and discuss regional specific themes and challenges
4. Identify appropriate regional advocacy methods to promote quality and appropriate CTP programmes and propose key ways forward

The group commented that the scope of work was realistic if an extra inter-agency resource person was available to chair the group, but if not then it would need to be revised and reduced.

Next steps: Discuss with key donors if there are funds to support an inter-agency resource as a chair to support the development and direction of the group going forward. Based on the results of this the TOR and work plan can then be finalised.

Presentation – Overview on Cash Feasibility Assessments, Isidro Navarro, IFRC

- **When are cash transfers feasible?** When external factors in the socio-economic context, government and donor policies, as well as internal factors of the institution such as capacity, guidelines and SOPs are conducive to the implementation of cash transfers.
- **CTP Feasibility Criteria:**
 - Relevant to Agency Mandates
 - Relevant to Target Population. Needs can be met through CTP
 - Market Systems (e.g. integration, availability, competition)
 - Acceptance (community, government)
 - Beneficiary protection/ gender
 - Service Provider Capacity & Transfer Mechanisms
 - Institutional capacity and that of Implementing Partners
 - Cost-Benefit Analysis (efficiency, effectiveness)
 - Coordination mechanisms
 - Links with existing social protection systems
 - Opportunities for financial integration of beneficiaries
- **Why Joint feasibility assessments?**
 - Cash is multisector

- Using the same transfer modality mechanism is convenient and easy for beneficiaries as well as cheaper and easier to manage for donors
 - Strong push from donors for few CTP contracts in emergency response
 - In the future we may be competing with governments and private sector for donor funds for CTP
 - Solution: Consortiums? Joint CTP? Merciless competition?
 - For joint CTP we need to start with joint feasibility and then joint programming
- **Implications**
 - Coordination mechanism
 - Common feasibility criteria
 - Common tools
 - Joint analysis and feasibility assessment results
 - Approval process is complicated
 - Strong preparedness essential. We cannot wait for the emergency to happen to start working on it.
 - This is only for the feasibility. Then we have to discuss and agree “who does what” during implementation.
 - Who contracts the service provider?
 - Who manages the platform?
 - Joint CTP requires institutional commitment to do it because it is time consuming and difficult.
- **Risks/challenges of joint assessments:**
 - Low awareness in country teams about the need and advantages of joint CTP
 - Increased reputational risks (working with new and several stakeholders)
 - Easier that something goes wrong because joint =cumbersome
 - Easier to have slow response and implementation

Presentation – Overview on Pacific Cash Working Group Joint Feasibility Assessments, Suzanne Wargo, PRCWG

CTP in the Pacific a Feasibility Scoping Study – CaLP, DFAT and WFP

Looked broadly at Pacific Island Countries and in-depth in Fiji and Tonga

Key Findings:

- Remittances, social safety nets, micro-finance and small grants widely used
- Social, cultural and gender-related issues underpin concern about appropriateness
- Markets are not well integrated and lack competitiveness; information and data on markets are limited; access and supply chain challenges
- Small range of FSPs, however growth in remittance companies, mobile money and commercial banking

Recommendations from the study are being used to support next steps of CTP preparedness, including country specific research and analysis and activities being undertaken by the Pacific Regional Cash Working Group

Vanuatu CTP Feasibility Study – FAO, WFP and Oxfam

Research conducted in 6 locations, including urban, rural and remote communities to review and support operational preparedness for CTP

Initial findings and next steps:

- Strong indications that CTP could be feasible in some communities however further research is required
- An in-depth integrated supply chain and market analysis will be conducted at national and sub-national level
- Data collection will be expanded including urban, peri-urban, rural and remote areas
- Generation of cash transfer/in-kind modality maps as well as market access and supply chain flow mapping
- Financial service provider capacity assessments to identify ability to rapidly scale up
- Operational modelling to identify what modalities are most feasible and where

Solomon Islands Cash Feasibility Study – WFP and FAO (local NGO counterpart TBC)

Aims to:

- Understand level of acceptance and preference of CTP
- Understand livelihoods, nutrition, agriculture and food security
- Analyse accessibility to markets and local market dynamics
- Analyse the accessibility and use of financial service providers
- Assess the supply chain and capacity to meet increased demand

Bridging Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection Systems – WFP and World Bank

- Study to review current Social Protection systems in Fiji and provide recommendations for strengthening Social Protection systems to be more shock responsive
- Report currently being finalised

PRCWG focusing on 5 countries (Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa and Tonga)

- Participating in Regional Inter-cluster Coordination Group meetings/activities
- Undertaking a regional mapping exercises to:
 - Identify CTP capacity as well as identifying key steps partners are taking to strengthen own organisational capacity
 - Identify where and how CTP has been used in region
- Capacity building and training
 - CalP training - CTP Fundamentals ; CTP Strategic Planning and Decision Making
 - Further training needs assessment
- Collaborating with partners to develop a regional CTP guidance note

Challenges and Opportunities

- Expression of interest by partners to consider CTP as an option and willingness to learn more
- Needs, challenges, constraints and opportunities vary by country
- Different partners, capacities and priorities in Pacific Island Countries
- Operational requirements and constraints
- Partner participation and meaningful engagement with PRCWG
- Further advocacy on how and where CTP may be appropriate

Presentation – Overview on Afghanistan Joint Feasibility Assessments, Shereen Noori, WFP

WHAT: UNHCR, WFP, OCHA and UNICEF conducted a feasibility assessment of the most suitable transfer modalities for aid delivery as well as the possibility of delivering this aid within multi-agency and multi-sectorial schemes. Other partners participate in the assessment (Gov. dept and NGOs)

- This cash feasibility assessment is for emergency **preparedness and response**
- This is not a “ needs assessment to identify needs of vulnerable groups”
- It does not promote the use of cash but rather the most suitable **transfer mechanism** (cash, in-kind or vouchers)

Deliverable: Joint Cash Feasibility Assessment report

Proposed next steps for discussion within the Afghanistan CWG:

- Joint Response Options Analysis based on assessment findings
- Use findings to evaluate the possibility of designing a Joint Cash scheme in Nangarhar scale up of returnee influx
- Formalizing the joint assessment process and conduct feasibility assessment in another location of the country (DFID funding available until 31st March 2017)
- Include the Joint Cash feasibility assessment as part of the HRP/HNO process so that it is conducted every year (consider including other UN Agencies and Government/NGO partners)

Open Discussion:

- Philippines:
 - Philippines CWG shared key activities of joint work, such as a joint needs assessment following Typhoon Haima in northern Philippines, FSP mapping and planning for joint emergency preparedness;
 - Joint assessments following disasters are sometimes carried out between CWG members and the government, but in the past year, there has been little government request for support in this area;
 - A key need is capacity building in markets assessments and analyses, given a gap in knowledge. To this end, the Philippines CWG is organizing a Markets Learning Event for relevant stakeholders, including government. Key questions will be raised, such the minimum requirements acceptable by the government in order to implement CBT.
- Critical to ensure that feasibility assessments are not too large and capture minimum requirements in order to save time and funds.
- It would be useful to capture all experiences of CBT operations and assessments so that we can learn the key findings.
- Joint feasibility is one element, but the next key step is joint operations. What does this mean for common platforms, FSPs, beneficiary management?
- How can we plan for multi-purpose cash yet remain realistic in expectations? It would be important to take stock of how long these operations have taken to set up, under what

conditions and environment. What environment, institutional commitment, objectives and incentives are required for a successful joint assessment or joint MPC operation?

Next Steps:

- Identify funding for an inter-agency resource person to support the chairing of the RCWG
- Finalise TOR and share with the group
- Develop RCWG Work Plan
- Country-level CWGs to share key lessons learnt from joint assessments
- Plan for Q3 RCWG on Wednesday 20th September at the WFP Office with the main topic on Multi-Purpose Cash, bringing in experiences from the Bangladesh CWG and counterparts in the Middle East.